

South Carolina

Adoption Assistance- Who Do You Contact?

State Contact Information

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Adoption Assistance- Who is Eligible?

A good place to start. Public adoption in South Carolina is administered by the Department of Social Services (DSS), Office of Program Policy and Oversight (OPPO). DSS and adoption links: www.state.sc.us/dss/ and www.state.sc.us/dss/adoption/steps.htm. Or phone: 888.CARE-4-US (888.227.3487).

1. What specific factors or conditions does your state consider to determine that a child cannot be placed with adoptive parents without providing financial assistance? ("What is your state definition of special needs?")

A child with special needs is defined as a child that has at least one of the following needs or circumstances that may be a barrier to placement or adoption without financial assistance:

- African American or of blended racial heritage and six years of age or older
- Caucasian and ten years of age or older
- African American or of blended racial heritage and a member of a sibling group of two or more children, one of whom is at least six years of age
- African American or of blended racial heritage and a member of a sibling group of three or more children of any age
- Caucasian and a member of a sibling group of three or more children, one of whom is at least six years of age
- Caucasian and a member of a sibling group of four or more children of any age
- Member of a sibling group that includes a special needs child
- Physical, mental or emotional handicap
- At risk of developing a physical, mental or emotional handicap due to a condition existing before adoption

2. What are the eligibility criteria for your state-funded adoption assistance program?

In order to be eligible for state-funded adoption assistance a child must be a special needs child as defined above and in the custody of the state of South Carolina for placement.

3. What is the maximum amount a family may receive in non-recurring adoption expenses from your state? Adoptive parents can receive reimbursement of certain approved, "one-time" adoption expenses incurred in the process of finalizing a special needs adoption.

\$250.00

4. Does your state enter into deferred adoption assistance agreements? In some states, adoptive parents can enter into an agreement in which they choose to defer the receipt of a Medicaid card, the monthly monetary payment, or both and can elect to receive the Medicaid card and/or monetary payment at another time.

South Carolina offers deferred adoption assistance. Adoptive parents and the state must sign the adoption assistance agreement prior to adoption finalization with a payment level of zero indicated in the agreement. The payment rate can be raised in the future to meet the changing needs of the adopted child.

5. When may adoption assistance payments and benefits begin in your state?

Adoption assistance payments and benefits may begin in South Carolina at adoption placement.

6. How are changes made to the adoption assistance agreement in your state?

- a. When can a parent request a change in the adoption assistance agreement?
- b. How does a parent request a change in the adoption assistance agreement?
- c. What if a parent does not receive the change they request in the adoption assistance agreement?

Adoptive parents can request a modification in the adoption assistance agreement whenever there is a change in the family's circumstances or the needs of the child. If the child is found to have a preexisting condition after the adoption assistance agreement is finalized, the agreement can be amended to include the condition. A written request detailing the need for change must be submitted to the adoption assistance worker or the Special Needs Administrator for review. Certified medical or therapeutic documentation from a therapist or physician supporting the need must accompany the request for modification. Agreements are reviewed annually. Families are contacted to determine if there have been any changes for the child or family that affects the adoption assistance agreement. Proof of school attendance becomes necessary as the adopted child nears and passes their eighteenth birthday. DSS local county offices locator and state contacts link: www.state.sc.us/dss/contact/index.html.

Adoption Assistance- Post Adoption Services

7. What types of post adoption services are available in your state and how do I find out more about them?

Post-adoption services in South Carolina are administered by the Department of Social Services (DSS), Office of Program Policy and Oversight (OPPO) through DSS, private agencies, and family organizations. Post adoption services include the following examples:

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| 1. Information and referral | 4. Support groups | 7. Respite |
| 2. Educational programs | 5. Therapeutic intervention | 8. Residential treatment |
| 3. Educational material | 6. Advocacy | 9. Search services (reunion register) |

South Carolina has an Adoption Preservation (AP) program to serve adoptive families. AP services primarily consist of linking families to existing resources, case management, support services, and counseling. DSS, in concert with Clemson University, offers family retreats known as Family Strengthening Weekends through the 4-H Leadership Center Clemson University Cooperative Extension Service. Six weekends are available over a six month period of time are available to the entire adoptive family. One series begins in January and another in July. See the DSS Adoption Services link: www.state.sc.us/dss/adoption/preserve.htm.

Parents Reaching Out to Parents (PRO-Parents) is a group that provides advocacy for families working with the school systems to meet the needs of their adoptive child. A state agency known as South Carolina Protection and Advocacy also helps adoptive families manage system issues. DSS local county offices locator and state contacts link: www.state.sc.us/dss/contact/index.html.

Parent organizations exist to assist families address the concerns particular to adoption. The South Carolina Foster/Adoptive Parent Association services all of South Carolina and comprises 1700 families representing 4800 children. The group hosts Foster/Adoptive Recruitment Expos and provides training and consultation. Address: P.O. Box 39; Elgin, South Carolina 29045; phone: 803.865.2020. Another group, the Kershaw County Foster Parent Association has a Computer Buddy program with Internet capability and provides life book materials. Address: 50 Nature Lane; Elgin, South Carolina 29045; phone: 803.408.0686. Many organizations provide a variety of respite options. See South Carolina's Respite Programs link: www.respitelocator.org/s1states.htm.

Note: Not all services may be available in all cases. Contact your adoption assistance worker or post adoption services contact for information regarding process, eligibility, availability, and duration of services.

Adoption Assistance- Medical assistance

8. What mental health services are provided by your state?

Public mental health services for children in South Carolina are administered by the Department of Mental Health (DMH), Division of Children, Adolescents and Their Families (DCAF) and include the following examples: assessment, case management services, day treatment, out-patient treatment (counseling/therapy), in-patient hospitalization, wraparound services, residential treatment services (in-patient general psychiatric and substance abuse units), school-based services, Youthful Sexual Offenders Program, and Intensive Family Services and Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST) Initiatives.

Services are largely provided through the DMH's network of seventeen local community mental health centers. DMH seeks to provide services in as natural and comfortable a setting for the family and child as possible, such as in the school or home. DMH's vision is to develop a statewide system of services that is *child centered, family focused, community based, and culturally competent*.

See Division of Children, Adolescents and their Families link: www.state.sc.us/dmh/caf/welcomecaf.htm and Service Delivery System link: www.state.sc.us/dmh/caf/services.htm for detailed program information. See also the child and adolescent mental health link: www.state.sc.us/dmh/clinical/child.htm for mental health issue definitions/diagnosis information.

Note: Not all services may be available in all cases. Contact your adoption assistance worker or medical assistance specialist for information regarding process, eligibility, availability, and duration of services.

9. Does your state provide additional finances or services for medical or therapeutic needs not covered under your state medical plan to children receiving adoption assistance?

South Carolina has a program known as *Supplemental Benefits for Medical Assistance*. Funding is available for conditions that preexisted adoption finalization. Adoptive families must determine the amount of the supplement and request this benefit at the time the adoption assistance agreement is drafted and signed. Another program, *Supplemental Benefits for Medical Assistance (SBMA)* is available to meet children's physical, emotional, and psychological needs unable to be met under any other resource, public or private. Availability is limited to children placed through the South Carolina Department of Social Services.

Note: Not all services may be available in all cases. Contact your adoption assistance worker for information regarding process, eligibility, availability, and duration of services.

Adoption Assistance- Fair Hearings

10. What is your state's process for applying for a fair hearing? A fair hearing is a legal, administrative procedure that provides a forum to address disagreements with agency decisions.

Adoptive parents can request a fair hearing whenever there is disagreement with a Department of Social Services (DSS) decision that affects their child's adoption assistance benefits or a delay in a requested DSS action. Requests for fair hearing must be in writing and sent to the Office of Administrative Hearings and

Individual and Provider Rights (OAH) within thirty days of a family's receipt of an adverse DSS decision. OAH will usually schedule a hearing within ninety days (between thirty and ninety) after the initial request for fair hearing. A three-member committee consisting of a hearing officer and two members appointed by the State DSS Director conducts hearings. Final decisions are issued within thirty days from the conclusion of the hearing and sent by certified mail to the adoptive parents.

See South Carolina's fair hearing document link: www.state.sc.us/dss/forms/files/2410.pdf. Send written requests for fair hearing to the address below or phone: 800.311.7220 or TTY 800.311.7219 for information.

South Carolina Department of Social Services
Individual and Provider Rights
Office of Administrative Hearings
P.O. Box 1520
Columbia, South Carolina 29202-1520

Adoption Assistance- Web/Internet Information

11. What is your state Web address for general adoption information?

South Carolina's general adoption links: www.state.sc.us/dss/adoption/index.html (Scroll down to view all listed information, including General Overview, Program Trends, Adoption Resources, Media Recruitment, Adoption Subsidy Programs, and Care 4 Us) and www.state.sc.us/dss/adoption/faqs.htm (Frequently Asked Questions)

See also *The Photo Album of Adoptive Children, Linking Children with Families Adoption Album* presented in a notebook format with headings listed vertically along the right-hand margin, link: www.state.sc.us/dss/adoption/intro.htm

12. What is your state Web address for adoption assistance information?

South Carolina's adoption assistance links:
www.state.sc.us/dss/adoption/finance.htm and
www.state.sc.us/dss/adoption/index.html#ADOPTIONSUBSIDYPROGRAMS (See second to last paragraph, *Adoption Subsidy Programs*)

13. What is your state Web address for state-specific medical assistance information for children?

South Carolina's state-specific medical assistance links:
Medicaid: www.dhhs.state.sc.us/Default.htm?wbc_purpose=Basic

Medicaid, Children: www.dhhs.state.sc.us/ServiceRecipients/Children.htm?wbc_purpose=Basic

Medicaid program overview link:
www.dhhs.state.sc.us/InsideDHHS/Bureaus/BureauofBeneficiaryandSystemsSupport/service11121132003.htm?wbc_purpose=Basic